

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 CCO-00 INRE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 IO-12 DPW-01 RSR-01

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O 051030 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1228

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CINCPAC

USSAF 7 AF

CINCSAC

UNCLAS SAIGON 07862

3. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: MARR, VS, CA

SUBJECT: PRG STATEMENT ON QUANG TRI, ICCS HELICOPTER INCIDENT

1. AT PRG DELEGATION SATURDAY PRESS BRIEFING (MAY5), WHICH WAS ATTENDEND BY TWELVE FOREIGN NEWSMEN AND ABOUT TWELVE VIETNAMESE REPORTERS, COL DUONG TIN THAO REPEATED IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT THE CHARGE THAT U. S. DRONE AIRCRAFT ENTERED A PRESCRIBED ICCS AIR CORRIDOR IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE ON MAY 2 JUST BEFORE TWO ICCS HELICOPTERS WERE SCHEDULED TO FLY TO GIO LINH. HE SAID THE " PILOTLESS" U. S. PLANCE FLEW FROM SOUTH TO NORTH INTO THE ICCS AIR CORRIDOR AT THE SAME ALTITUDE ASSIGNED TO THE ICCS HLICOPTERS. THE DRONE WAS FLYING NORTHWARD IN DIRECTION OF GIO LINH, HE SAID. COL THAO SAID THAT WHEN PLAF SOLDIERS FIRED INTO THE AIR CORRIDOR THEY WERE SHOOTING AT THE DRONE AND NOT AT ICCS CHOOPERS.

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2. IN QUESTION PERIOD FOLLOWING STATEMENT NEWSMEN ASKED IF THE PRG KNEW WHAT KIND OF PLANE THE ALLEGED DRONE WAS. COL THAO IS REPORTED TO HAVE GIVEN A VAGUE ANSWER WHICH REPEATED CHARGE THAT PLANE BEING SHOT AT WAS A U. S. DRONE.

3. WHEN ASKED WHY THE PRG WOULD NOT SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH ICCS DESIGNATING PERMANENT ICCS AIR CORRIDORS OVER PRG TERRITORY, COL THAO SAID THAT THE PRG FELT ITSELF CAPABLE OF GUARANTEEING FLIGHT CORRIDORS NOT MORE THAN FOUR KILOMETERS IN WIDTH. THE ICCS WANTED CORRIDORS OF 8 KILOMETERS, HE SAID. COL. THAO ADDED THAT PLAF TROOPS HAD NEVER BEEN ORDERED TO FIRE ON ICCS AIRCRAFT BUT HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PROTECT THEM AND INSURE THEIR SAFETY.

4. COLONEL THAO SAID THAT PERMANENT PRG AIR CORRIDORS EXISTED ALREADY FOR ICCS PLANES, THE ONE TO GIO LINH, TO LOC NINH AND TO ALL REGIONAL ICCS BASES IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

5. COLONEL THAO SAID THAT NO ICCS PLANE HAD EVER BEEN HARMED WHILE FLYING IN AN ASSIGNED AIR CORRIDOR. HE CITED THE SHOOTING DOWN OF AN ICCS CHOPPER ON APRIL 7 AS HAVING HAPPENED BECAUSE THE TWO HELICOPTERS HAD STRAYED OUTSIDE THEIR DESIGNATED CORRIDOR. HE ADDED THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE PUPPET TROOPS WERE QUITE CAPABLE OF SHOOTING AT ICCS PLANES AND THEN PLACING BLAME ON THE PLAF.

6. SOUTH VIETNAMESE REPORTERS WALKED OUT OF PRESS BRIEFING WHEN COLONEL THAO ACCUSED ONE REPORTER OF BEING A PLANT AND STOOGE OF THE GVN AND NOT A LEGITIMATE NEWSMAN. EARLIER, THE ACCUSED REPORTER, DESCRIBED AS A FREE LANCE JOURNALIST, HAD ASKED A QUESTION IN FORM OF TEN MINUTE DIATRIBE AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS GOING BACK INTO RECENT HISTORY AS FAR AS THE DIEM PERIOD.

7. DURING BREAK IN PRESS BRIEFING, COLONEL THAO SPOKE INFORMALLY WITH FIVE OR SIX FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS. HE SAID U. S. HAD USED DRONES IN PAST OVER NORTH VIETNAM, GUIDING THEM INTO AIR CORRIDORS ASSIGNED TO SOVIET AIRLINERS, IMPLYING THAT DRONES SOUGHT PROTECTION FROM ANTI- AIRCRAFT BY FLYING CLOSE TO PASSENGER AIRLINERS.

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